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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 002208

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BT](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: DISCUSSING POSSIBLE BHUTANESE REFUGEE RETURNS

REF: STATE 179097

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty, Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request cable. Please see para. 6.

Reaching Agreement with Bhutan ...

[1](#)2. (C) On October 6, the Ambassador discussed with Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey His Majesty's Government of Nepal's (HMGN's) expectations regarding the agreement Pandey reached with Bhutan on the margins of UNGA about the returns of Category 1 and 4 Bhutanese refugees in Khudunabari Camp to Bhutan (ref A). Pandey explained that although he still suspected that neither Bhutan nor India wanted to solve the Bhutanese refugee problem, he hoped that Bhutan (RGOB) would implement the agreement. Pandey said he had had two meetings with the RGOB Foreign Minister. In the first meeting, Pandey had assured his counterpart that Nepal wanted a stable and prosperous Bhutan; there were indications that terrorists had already infiltrated the refugee camps, so it was in Bhutan's interest to solve the problem now and not let it fester. Nepal wanted to build trust between the two countries, he had stressed; after the two countries implemented the already agreed-upon decisions and moved to the next phase, Nepal would "look after Bhutan's interests" (NFI).

[1](#)3. (C) Pandey told the Ambassador that in the following meeting, the Bhutanese FM, after consulting with Thimpu, had delivered a letter he had signed committing the RGOB to immediately implement the decisions about returning Categories 1 and 4. RGOB would then work with HMGN to develop a plan for the other two categories. Pandey said that he had told the Bhutanese Foreign Minister that Nepal would guarantee the security of Bhutanese officials visiting the camps. Pandey said he had briefed the King, who was happy about these developments, but had not yet described the details of the agreement to Nepal's Cabinet. Pandey noted the Bhutanese FM had invited him to Thimpu, but Pandey would delay traveling there until after the decision on repatriation had been implemented.

... And Then Third Country Resettlement Possible

[1](#)4. (C) FM Pandey remarked that after repatriation of this first tranche, Nepal would consider third country resettlement for the remaining Bhutanese refugees. He commented that a few hundred Bhutanese refugees might wish to live in Nepal, but if the others wished to go anywhere, that would be acceptable to Nepal. Pandey also undertook to allow the UN's verification and profiling exercise to start as soon as Bhutan started implementing the agreement. Until then, Pandey did not want to do anything to indicate to Bhutan that Nepal was prepared to move ahead on resettlement. He stressed that it was key that RGOB accept some refugees back before third country resettlement began; otherwise, the RGOB might at some point be tempted to expel from Bhutan additional Bhutanese of Nepalese ethnicity.

Comment

[1](#)5. (C) A solution to the Bhutanese refugee situation finally could be emerging. Post believes that we, along with other concerned countries, including India, should press both HMGN and RGOB to start repatriation as soon as possible. We doubt that many Category 4 refugees would choose to return to Bhutan to face trial (in many cases for their political beliefs), but the return of Category 1 refugees would be at least a symbolic statement that the international community had not allowed Bhutan to get away with ethnic cleansing.

Action Request

[1](#)6. (C) Post requests that Department pass the message to Thimpu that HMGN is enthusiastic about restarting the process and that the USG supports the agreement and would like to see early progress on the repatriation of Category 1 and 4

refugees of the Khudunabari Camp to Bhutan.
MORIARTY